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# Jordanian Strike Force: U.S. Reviving Old Plan

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WASHINGTON—The Reagan Administration's plan to spend about \$200 million on a Jordanian strike force that could intervene in a Persian Gulf crisis appears to be a revived version of an idea proposed in various forms in recent years, U.S. officials said Friday.

And whether or not the current plan is aborted by premature publicity, a Pentagon official indicated that there will continue to be efforts to support a strong Arab force in the Mideast capable of helping pro-Western regimes resist extremist or Soviet-backed takeover attempts.

For the record, the Administration continued to refuse comment on the plan, which first was reported Thursday on Israeli radio. A State Department official said Friday that the program is "classified"—meaning it is secret—but basically confirmed its existence.

## 'An Important Friend'

White House spokesman Larry Speakes, while refusing to confirm or deny news reports on the plan, said: "Jordan is an important friend of the United States with which we have longstanding and well-known military supply relationships. It is in the interest of the United States to continue these relationships, as both countries have an interest in regional security. It should surprise no one that questions of regional security are regularly addressed."

The Administration once had hoped that Israeli forces could be used, if necessary, to defend oil-rich regions from Soviet incursions but quickly recognized that help from Israel, for any reason, would be anathema to Arab nations.

Last year's version of the plan provided for Pentagon arms sales to Jordan for the special strike force, plus covert funds from U.S. intelligence agencies to Jordan to pay for those arms, an informed source said. The House Intelligence Committee killed that proposal by refusing to authorize the funds, he said.

The current plan apparently was designed to avoid any intelligence agency participation by working wholly within the Defense Department through its foreign-assistance program.

One Pentagon official suggested that the aid would consist of providing a Jordanian force with special training in commando operations, supplying it with weapons such as plastic explosives, and transporting it to combat regions in U.S. C-130 aircraft.

Another official said that U.S. transport would be the main element in any U.S. aid for the Jordanian force of about one infantry brigade—usually several thousand men—with perhaps additional equipment, such as river-crossing devices, supplied as needed.

Jordanian military units are widely recognized as the most disciplined and best-trained Arab force in the Mideast, having built for decades upon British military traditions and the leadership of British officers.

Both U.S. officials denied that any aid for Jordan as part of the plan would include F-16 fighter planes or mobile Hawk anti-aircraft missiles. Israel has strongly opposed sale of such weapons to Jordan as threats to its security.

In Jerusalem on Friday, a senior Israeli official quoted by the Washington Post said Israel opposes any such plan to train and equip a Jordanian force. "It is supposed to be some kind of rapid-deployment force, but it could be used against Israel, he said."

Whatever its details, the plan was laid before congressional Armed Services and Appropriations committees in recent weeks, from which officials believe the story was leaked to a pro-Israeli organization in Washington. In turn, this organization allegedly passed it to a Radio Israel correspondent.